Usage and disposal of mercury

*113. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has initiated any instruction/guidelines to the private and Government hospitals for usage and disposal of mercury, because the minimal risk level for mercury of 0.2 micro gram, but in hospitals the mercury level is forty times higher than the normal limit which leads to neuro-developmental disorders in newborns;

(b) if so, whether there is any environmental authority to monitor such level to save staff, including doctors and paramedical employees and patients;

(c) the protective measures taken in this behalf; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) to (d) Improper handling and breakage of instruments containing mercury contaminates the solid waste generated in hospitals and can cause environmental pollution.

Guidelines for proper collection and disposal of the spilled mercury have been circulated by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to all State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs), Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) in Union Territories and other conterned agencies. The CPCB has also issued instructions to all the SPCBs and PCCs that mercury spillages/losses in health care facilities need to be given proper attention so that spilled mercury is collected and sent back to the manufacturers, and measures are taken to ensure that the spilled mercury does not become part of the bio-medical or other solid waste generated from the healthcare facilities. Any waste containing equal to or greater than 50 ppm or mercury is categorized as hazardous waste as per the Hazardous Wastes (Management & Handling) Rules, 2003 and healthcare facilities are required to dispose of such wastes in accordance with the said Rules. The SPCBs/ PCCs have also been requested to bring this aspect/requirement to the notice of the healthcare facilities and ensure incorporation of appropriate conditions in the authorizations granted by them under the Bio-Medical Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1998.

No ill effects of mercury in any Central Government Hospital have come to the notice of the Government.

Sri Lanka's observation regarding Setusamudram Project

†*114. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Sri Lankan Government has called Setusamudram project dangerous for marine life and coastal areas of the country;

(b) whether they have informed about it to the Indian Government; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) to (c) The Sethuamudram Ship Channel Project is an Indian Project and is located

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

within the Indian side of the International Maritime Boundary Line. Certain issues have been raised by the Government of Sri Lanka, particularly on the environmental implications of the project. Consistent with the cordial and friendly relations between the two countries, the Government of India's endeavour is to address the genuine concerns of the Government of Sri Lanka through mutual discussions for which a mechanism has been put in place.

Per captia daily consumption

*115. SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN:
SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the number of persons with per capita daily consumption of upto Rs. 20 has increased from 811 million in 1999-2000 to 836 million in 2004-05;

(b) if so, the reason therefor in spite of economic growth; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to reverse the trend?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) No, Sir. The National Sample Survey data actually show a decline in this number from 1999-2000 to 2004-05.

(b) and (c) In view of (a) above, do not arise.

Expansion of Cellular Phone Services

*116. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether CAG of India has pulled up Public Sector Telecom Company, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), for inordinate delays in carrying out its expansion plans as the delay has led BSNL to lose new customers to the private mobile companies;

(b) whether CAG in its report has pointed out that BSNL failed to select the suppliers for a major expansion of cellular mobile telephone services by 641 lakh lines even after passage of nearly two years;

(c) if so, the other main objections raised by CAG in its report; and

(d) the steps being considered by BSNL to improve the position?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Sir, CAG of India has highlighted some areas where BSNL has to focus to improve its efficiency. Accordingly BSNL has taken steps to strengthen its machinery for acquisition of sites, infrastructure creation and taking clearance from Standing Advisory Committee for Frequency Allocation (SACFA), so that it does not suffer on account of opportunity lost.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) CAG has taken note to delay in initial launch of Cellular Mobile Service and suggested some measures to improve planning of mobile services expansion and its implementation.